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Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia

and their teaching about the Church

PREFACE

This work attempts to answer the question: is there grace in the Moscow Patriarchate? There are two diametrically opposed points of view: some consider the modern Moscow Patriarchate to be the legitimate successor of the pre-revolutionary Greek-Russian Catholic Church and, therefore, possessing the full saving fullness of the Holy Mysteries; others, conversely, perceive the Moscow Patriarchate as a heretical, graceless gathering, having nothing in common (except for its outward form) with True Orthodoxy.

Who is right in this fundamental debate? The answer to this question is provided by the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, among whom were many outstanding theologians and spiritual ascetics.

As is well known, since the first centuries of Christianity, whenever disputes arose within the Church, the Confessors were appealed to for canonical resolution, their authority always being unquestionable. It was thanks to the Holy Confessors that the question of the reception of those who had fallen away during persecution was resolved, and the Donatist heresy was exposed and condemned in the 4th century. It was under their influence that the Resolutions of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, condemning the iconoclastic heresy, were adopted. By the ineffable providence of God, we, living at the end of the 20th century, have the unique opportunity to turn to the unwavering opinion of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, who sealed their devotion to the True Church of Christ and its Divine Founder with their blood. And, indeed, who else but the Holy Fathers and Confessors of the most recent period of Church history can resolve this question?

PART I

ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE NEW MARTYRS AND CONFESSORS OF RUSSIA
AND ANALYSIS OF OBJECTIONS AGAINST IT

In 1927, the Deputy Patriarchal Locum Tenens, Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) of Nizhny Novgorod, then the nominal head of the Russian Orthodox Church, issued the infamous Declaration on the Unity of Church Interests with the Interests of the God-fighting State, which he left in accordance with the demands of the Soviet government.

The most authoritative part of the Russian episcopate, both in Russia itself and abroad, fundamentally disagreed with Metropolitan Sergius's new anti-church policies, which led to a new schism in the Russian Orthodox Church. Those Orthodox bishops who protested the unlawful actions of their "canonical" primate in word or deed soon found themselves in the dungeons of the GPU, tortured in prisons and camps, and slowly dying in exile. These new confessors and martyrs condemned Metropolitan Sergius as a schismatic, heretic, and apostate, depriving him of "the right to lead the Russian Church" (St. New Martyr, Bishop Alexy of Voronezh).

Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), having become the heresiarch of Sergianism, thereby determined the death sentence in eternity not only for himself, but also for all who consciously or through unforgivable frivolity followed him, becoming the continuers and bearers of his Judas sin.

What would have happened if Metropolitan Sergius had found no followers or successors? Obviously, the heresy of Sergianism would have perished along with his name. And the only reason the Sergianist lie continues to cripple human souls is because such successors and followers still exist, and to this day we observe in church life such an ugly phenomenon as the "Soviet Church."

Characterizing the spiritual essence of Sergianism, Archbishop Vitaly (Maksimenko) wrote that "this is not the personal sin of this or that hierarch, but the fundamental sin of the Moscow Patriarchate, affirmed, proclaimed, bound by oath before the whole world, so to speak, a 'dogmatized apostasis.' Sergianism is a sin that has bound all members of the 'Soviet Church' without exception, bound them by the mere virtue of their organic affiliation with it, which has as its foundation stone not Christ—the Truth—but the devil—the father of lies, to whom the authors of the 1927 Declaration swore an oath of allegiance. Since then, every new "patriarch" of the Soviet Church, and through him, all the "faithful children" of the "Moscow Patriarchate," recognizing the spiritual authority of these "patriarchs," pledged to be a faithful executor of this terrible oath, stained with the blood of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. Therefore, everything uttered by the holy New Martyrs and Confessors regarding the person and deeds of the spiritual founder of the "Soviet Church," Metropolitan Sergius, must be applied to the Church as a whole, since the bitter fruits of Sergius' Declaration are still being borne by this "church."

The top leaders of the “patriarchate” last officially declared their allegiance to the Declaration of 1927 at the Bishops’ Council of 1990, chaired by “Patriarch” Alexy II, in the St. Daniel Monastery.

The Appeal of the Council to the archpastors, pastors and all the faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church stated: “With all certainty we are obliged

“to emphasize that the Declaration of 1927 does not contain anything that would be contrary to the Word of God, would contain heresy and, thus, would provide a reason for departure from the church governing body that adopted it…” Thus, the council of hierarchs of the “Moscow Patriarchate” once again condemned the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, once again renounced their martyrdom and confession—renounced even when, it would seem, for the first time in seventy years of the Bolshevik yoke it became possible to freely confess the Truth.

What did Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and "his synod" actually proclaim in their Declaration? The key words of the document, by common consent, were the following:**“We want to be Orthodox and at the same time “to recognize the Soviet Union as our civil homeland, whose joys and successes are our joys and successes, and whose failures are our failures.”**By the word “homeland,” Metropolitan Sergius did not mean Russia, as we are constantly told Sergianist apologists are trying to instill this, and the USSR is a God-fighting state. This is proven by the general context of the Declaration, which, among other things, stated: "We, church leaders, are not with the enemies of our Soviet state…, but with our people and our government." And further: "Every blow directed at the Union, be it war, boycott, any public calamity, or simply a back-alley assassination like the one in Warsaw, is recognized by us as a blow directed at us." By this last, Metropolitan Sergius and his companions already completely identified themselves with the God-fighting Bolsheviks, essentially equating themselves with them. For the concept of "boycott" easily includes non-recognition of the holy martyrs. The New Martyrs and Confessors of the "church" legalized by the Soviets, and the "murder from around the corner, similar to the Warsaw one," refers to the execution of the Soviet ambassador, the Jew Pinchus Weiner (Voikov), one of the main executioners of the Tsar's Family, carried out in June 1927 at the Warsaw train station by the Russian high school student Boris Koverda. Thus, the entire "Moscow Patriarchate," represented by Metropolitan Sergius, declared its complete unity with the murderers of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia and the executioners of the Tsar's Family—declared not in words, but in deeds," as Metropolitan Sergius himself put it, having rendered active service to the Soviet authorities in the liquidation of Orthodox bishops as "counterrevolutionaries" and "political criminals."

It must be emphasized that the top leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate has never renounced the 1927 Declaration, has never repented for its complicity in the shedding of the blood of martyrs, and therefore everything written therein remains in force. Therefore, no hypocritical "repentance" of these leaders for the sin of regicide, no church "events" glorifying new martyrs and confessors will diminish their responsibility until there is a general council, on behalf of the entire Moscow Patriarchate, condemnation of the 1927 Declaration, recognition of this act in its entirety as criminal and treacherous, and repentance for the lawlessness committed by Metropolitan Sergius and his fellow hierarchs. Until then, all leaders of the "Moscow Patriarchate" are like the ancient scribes and Pharisees, whom the Lord rebuked:

> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you bear witness against yourselves that you are the sons of those who killed the prophets. Fill up therefore the measure of your fathers! You serpents, you generation of vipers! How will you escape the condemnation of Gehenna?” (Matthew 23:29)

The Holy New Martyrs and Confessors and the contemporary high-ranking "leaders" and "faithful children" of the Moscow false patriarchate are two diametrically opposed entities: the Church of the martyrs and the "church" of the tormentors. The Church of the crucified and the "church" of the crucifiers, the Church of truth and the "church" of lies. The Church of Christ and the "church" of Satan, even though the latter may clothe himself in the radiant vestments of an angel and don the guise of truth. "The Soviet and Catacomb churches are incompatible," said the Holy New Martyr Bishop Maxim of Serpukhov. It goes without saying that the "Soviet church," as a servant of Satan in the person of the godless, has deprived itself of grace, and no salvation of the soul is possible within it. The deprivation of God's grace is the logical outcome of the apostasy that has been swept away. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, testified to this through the new holy martyrs and confessors of the Russian land.

Why is the question so important for us: are the Sacraments performed in the “Moscow Patriarchate” blessed or ungraceful?

Because—in the words of St. Seraphim of Sarov—the acquisition of the grace of the Holy Spirit is the primary goal of the Christian life, without which salvation itself is impossible for a Christian. But the "Moscow Patriarchate," as a result of the heresy of Sergianism, fell away from the Church of Christ; the Soviet hierarchy betrayed Christ, and therefore cannot be the bearer of grace.
And in order to receive the grace of God, it is necessary to be a faithful and devoted member of only the true Church of Christ, outside of which it is in no way possible to receive this grace of the Holy Spirit.

It would seem that nothing could be clearer than this truism! Yet, in the minds of some stubborn ignoramuses, there still remain "thoughts lifted up against the mind of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). These ignoramuses, puffed up in their self-conceit, are not satisfied with the divinely inspired testimony of the New Martyrs of Russia, who clearly and unequivocally declared the "Moscow Patriarchate" to be devoid of grace. They begin to invent, disregarding the authority of these pillars of the Faith and jewels of Orthodoxy, their own arguments for the supposed possibility of the presence of God's grace in the "sacraments" performed by the Sergianist clergy and episcopate. But is it possible for the holy martyrs to... Should the New Martyrs and Confessors be suspected of some misunderstanding of the canonical and dogmatic truths of the Orthodox faith, of a lack of pastoral experience, of accusing their views of tendentiousness or fanaticism, and even of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, Who enlightened and strengthened them?

Is it possible to claim that their divine word, suffered through heroic deeds and sealed with the blood of martyrs, is not enough to pass a final judgment on the Sergian “church of the wicked” as a barren fig tree, cursed by God?... It seems there is no point in answering this question.

That is why those who stubbornly defend the opposite point of view always try not to mention the opinion of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia on this matter, as if this opinion never existed.

More cunning minds, however, attempt to present the whole matter as if the holy New Martyrs and Confessors, in speaking of the lack of grace of the Sergian "church," were expressing only their personal opinion, not binding on anyone. This is supposedly proven by certain ecclesiological differences between them. But a careful review of the evidence collected here reveals and proves the untenability of such a belief. The entire canonicity of their opposition to Sergianism was based precisely on, and consisted precisely in, that ecclesiology of theirs, the essence of which was especially vividly expressed by the holy martyr Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd and his followers, who considered all "those who are not with us and not for us" to be "enemies, traitors, and murderers of the Orthodox Church" (Letter of Metropolitan Joseph to Archimandrite Lev Yegorov). The attitude of Metropolitan Joseph's followers is even more negative. Joseph was among those bishops who, although they protested against the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius and the actions that followed it, continued to recognize him as their canonical head. After Metropolitan Agathangel of Yaroslavl and several like-minded bishops decided to rejoin Metropolitan Sergius after breaking with him, which was expressed in the act of March 25 / April 7, 1928, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd issued a rather harsh denunciation of their clearly inconsistent position, calling them "new traitors and betrayers of the truth and the right cause," "new crucifiers of Christ," "Judas," "deserters," and other unflattering epithets (see Letter of Metropolitan Joseph to Bishop Dimitry of Gdov). This denunciation had an effect on Metropolitan Agathangelos was so deeply affected that, shortly before his death, he finally and irrevocably distanced himself from Metropolitan Sergius, all his minions, and all his wicked deeds.

However, the brother-bishops Averky and Pakhomiy (Kedrov) attempted to explain in their Epistle the reason for the hesitation of some hierarchs regarding their attitude toward Metropolitan Sergius. "The majority of archpastors, pastors, and laity," wrote the brother-bishops, "having read these and similar expressions in Metropolitan Sergius' declaration, did not rush to protest, precisely because of the fear of causing division in the Church with a premature statement, and because of the hope that in their actions Metropolitan Sergius and the Synod would correct the errors they had made on paper. But, alas," Bishops Averky and Pakhomiy nevertheless admit, "reality did not justify our hopes."

Nevertheless, over time, many formal opponents of the 1927 Declaration, who disagreed with Metropolitan Joseph, themselves adopted the platform of Josephite ecclesiology. Archpriest M. Polsky mentions Archbishop Pachomius (Kedrov) that, having returned from imprisonment once, he "even believed in Metropolitan Sergius' declaration, but at approximately the same time as Bishop Damaskin, he was exiled a second time, and then realized his mistake and became irreconcilable." Likewise, the holy New Martyr Bishop Seraphim (Zvezdinsky) of Dmitrov, known as one of the most staunch confessors and opponents of Sergianism, apparently changed his attitude toward Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod. In connection with this, Metropolitan Kirill of Kazan and all such bishops noted that as a result of the change in some of their ecclesiological views, “contradictory attributions of some to one or the opposite sentiment became possible, as is especially the case with Seraphim Zvezdinsky.”

But despite all this, it was not possible to achieve unity of ecclesiological views among the entire episcopate opposed to Sergianism as quickly as would have been desired. Thus, the Holy New Martyr Patriarchal Locum Tenens Metropolitan Peter, while immediately rejecting the Sergian Declaration as the ecclesiastical arbitrariness of his Deputy, did not immediately deprive the latter of his powers. This served as a significant stumbling block for the hierarchs, who condemned Metropolitan Sergius in the hope of receiving full support from Metropolitan Peter. In 1929, Holy Martyr Bishop Damascene of Glukhovsky sent a messenger to him in distant exile, who gave the Locum Tenens a package of 22 documents outlining all the twists and turns of the church struggle. But he never received a response. In late 1929 - early 1930, Metropolitan Peter addressed Metropolitan Peter to him. Sergius sent two letters in which he informed his Deputy that "news of spiritual turmoil is coming from many places, primarily from clergy and laity, who are exerting strong pressure on me," but at the same time he stated that a decision to refuse "to fulfill the obedience entrusted to you... would not serve the good of the Church." In the accompanying note to this letter, Metropolitan Peter added: "Your powers are blessed by God and are binding." In 1931, in response to the authorities' demand that he relinquish his locum tenens, Metropolitan Peter, among other things, objected that "...my replacement must entail the departure of my deputy... I cannot treat such a circumstance with indifference." Finally, in 1935, the Bolsheviks arranged a confrontation between Metropolitan Peter and Metropolitan Sergius. Sergius in Nizhny Novgorod, "and the latter, according to Father M. Polsky, tried to convince him, but to no avail, of the necessity of recognizing the correctness of his (Sergius') policies." The Bolsheviks offered Metropolitan Peter "to assume the patriarchal throne, but subject to a number of specific demands. Metropolitan Peter was adamant and would not make any agreements. Soon he was again sent into exile."

Apparently, only after this did Metropolitan Peter's attitude toward his "legitimate" deputy finally change. Professor Ivan Andreev, a confessor of the Catacomb Church, mentions in one of his articles, among other things, an event that could have taken place precisely during this period: "approval of Metropolitan Joseph's position was received from exile from Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsy and from Metropolitan Kirill."<10> It is difficult at present to determine what this "approval" consisted of. But one can guess, based on the fact that in recent years secret communications were established between Metropolitan Peter and Metropolitan Joseph, -

With the blessing of Metropolitan Peter, in the event of his death, Metropolitan Joseph would head the Russian Church in his stead as Extraordinary Locum Tenens. This right was granted to Metropolitan Joseph by the Decision of the Local Council of 1917-18 on January 25, 1918, a fact known to few. This explanation also determines the behavior of the always cautious and calculating Metropolitan Kirill, as can be seen from the following.

Metropolitan Kirill, according to a reliable tradition preserved in the Catacomb Church, toward the end of his martyred life sided fully with Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, recognizing his authority as the head of the entire Russian Orthodox Church. By Providence's will, Metropolitans Kirill and Joseph found themselves together in Chimkent Prison in 1937, where they were executed on the same day—November 7/20, 1937.

"Initially, Metropolitan Kirill," testifies the catacomb confessor, schemamonk Epiphanius (Chernov), "disassociated himself from the Substitute as a schismatic. For Sergius had brought a great schism into the Church. But as Sergius increasingly deviated from canonical conduct—in other words, from Orthodoxy, and then from Christianity in general—the negative assessment of his actions took on a different significance. And when Metropolitans Kirill and Joseph, by God's providence, were united in their imprisonment, they concluded that Metropolitan Sergius had far exceeded the patristic understanding of heresy... They completely disassociated themselves from Metropolitan Sergius and his followers. This was all the more so because Metropolitan Joseph was aware of their conciliar excommunication, issued by the persecuted Church, whose persecutors included both Sergius himself and his entourage."

The same schemamonk Epiphanius describes the circumstances of the final days of both saints' lives as follows: "Here in Chimkent, Metropolitan Joseph met Metropolitan Kirill, lived under arrest with him, and suffered a martyr's death with him... When Metropolitans Kirill and Joseph were allowed out for walks, they would stay close together: Metropolitan Joseph, tall, and Metropolitan Kirill, short and stocky. These two figures, seemingly merged into one, symbolized a 'two-in-one unity.' The metropolitans would walk in a circle, always engaged in conversation, for here they could not be overheard. Their walks were always watched from the mountain by the catacomb nuns, to whom the metropolitans would give their blessing at the end of the walk, and they had to disguise themselves so that the guards would not notice the secret alarm." This signaling, as these catacomb nuns themselves later recounted, also consisted of Metropolitan Kirill bowing several times to Metropolitan Joseph's elbow as a prearranged signal, thus indicating his full recognition of the latter's authority and primacy. With the death of Metropolitan Peter, the powers of Locum Tenens automatically transferred (in accordance with the will of Patriarch Tikhon) to Metropolitan Kirill. Therefore, the latter could only recognize Metropolitan Joseph's primacy with the express permission of the legitimate Patriarchal Locum Tenens. Based on archival data, the exact date of Metropolitan Peter's death has now been determined: September 27/ October 19, 1937. Thus, Metropolitan Joseph became Extraordinary Locum Tenens for only 42 days, after which he and Metropolitan Kirill were executed.

Thus, the authority and significance of Metropolitan Joseph put an end to the ecclesiological disagreements among the first hierarchs of the Russian Church. When in 1936, despite the fact that the Patriarchal Locum Tenens, Metropolitan Peter, was still alive, Metropolitan Sergius usurped his authority. Then many bishops, even those who had been close collaborators with Sergius's Synod, rejected Metropolitan Sergius as the head of the Russian Church and joined the opposition (for example, Hieromartyr Archbishop Juvenaly Maslovsky).

Based on all of the above, one can conclude that if some hierarchs needed up to ten years before becoming convinced of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd's canonical succession, there is no guarantee that Archbishop Hilarion (Troitsky) was fundamentally incapable of changing his ecclesiological views on the Sergianist "church," leaving the sphere of canonical subordination to it, and even joining the Josephites, which was perhaps only prevented by his early death (he died in 1929).

In any case, in the process of gradually comprehending the ecclesiastical upheavals blamed on the Sergianists, representatives of the Orthodox episcopate of all movements opposed to Metropolitan Sergius clearly converged in their ecclesiological convictions, which is why we are citing their statements here without distinction as to their affiliation. This completely confirms the point that the denial of the grace-filled sacraments performed by the Sergianists was not merely the private opinion of the followers of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, Archbishop Feodor (Pozdeevsky), and Archbishop Andrei (Prince Ukhtomsky), but in fact, the shared ecclesiological outlook of the entire Russian Orthodox episcopate, which rejected the new anti-church policy of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky).

Another objection raised by proponents of the theory of the grace-filled Sergianist pseudo-church is the supposed contradiction between such "extreme" ecclesiological views and the practice of admitting heretics and schismatics into the Church. They most often cite the First Canon of St. Basil the Great, which they mistakenly see as the basis for their claim that the very leniency toward heretics and schismatics, who were reunited with the Church through various rites, supposedly testifies to the presence of grace in the extra-ecclesiastical rites performed over them while they were still in heresy and excommunication. Such an absurd explanation, of course, has no basis whatsoever, either in this Canon or in any other Canon of the Orthodox Church.

Let's examine in detail the First Rule of St. Basil the Great. This rule, in its context, is divided primarily into three parts:

1) a definition of what is heresy, what is schism, and what is a self-proclaimed gathering;

2) explanation of the reason for absence

the dissemination of grace in the sacraments performed outside the Church;

3) different degrees of leniency (oikonomia) when joining the Church for those who separated from it for various reasons.

As is evident from the canon itself, St. Basil the Great, while demonstrating the difference between heretics, "completely rejected and alienated in the faith itself," and schismatics, "as not yet alien to the Church," at the same time, in relation to both, he equally asserts that for both, as being outside the Church, the impartation of grace through the sacraments was cut off, and for the former, because of "an obvious difference in the very faith in God," and for the latter, although only "divided in opinions on certain ecclesiastical matters and questions that could be healed," because of their very deviation into schism. Concerning this, St. Basil says this: "For although the apostasy began through schism, those who fell away from the Church no longer possessed the grace of the Holy Spirit. The impartation of grace became scarce because the lawful succession was interrupted. For the first to apostatize received ordination from the fathers and, through the laying on of their hands, possessed spiritual gifts. But those who were rejected, having become laymen, had no authority to baptize or ordain, and could not impart to others the grace of the Holy Spirit—from which they themselves had fallen away. Therefore, the ancients commanded that those who came from them to the Church, as those baptized by the laity, be re-purified with true ecclesiastical baptism."

So, St. Basil fundamentally rejects the possibility of celebrating the Holy Sacraments outside the Church. But how can we explain his subsequent words (regardless of whether they refer to heretics or schismatics): "But since some in Asia have decidedly desired, for the edification of many, to curse their baptism, let them be accepted"? **Archbishop Hilarion (Troitsky) gives the following explanation of the rule:**

> “Regarding the method of receiving all apostates into the Church, Saint Basil, following the canon of the “ancients,” divides them into three categories: heresy, schism, unauthorized gathering..., but this is only in regard to the method of reception. It is absolutely impossible to understand Saint Basil’s words to mean that for him only heretics in the proper sense do not belong to the Church, while the rest still remain in the Church. “The baptism of schismatics, ... accept,” writes Saint Basil. The cited Greek words are often translated as follows: “as not yet alien to the Church” (Slavonic translation in the “book of rules”), “as still belonging to the Church” (Russian translation in the works of the holy father). But these are not translations, but interpretations that cannot be considered successful. Literally, it should be translated: “as still existing from the Church.” Here, the idea is not that schismatics still belong to the Church, but that they have recently left the Church. In any case, belonging to the Church can hardly be expressed by the preposition "...." It's difficult to imagine belonging to the Church as a series of stages: Church, unauthorized gathering, schism. If St. Basil's words "..." implied some kind of belonging to the Church of schismatics, then unauthorized gatherings should, in his opinion, belong to the Church even more strongly. Adherents of unauthorized gatherings are accepted only through repentance. But what about them?

What does Saint Basil say? "If someone, after being convicted of sin, is removed from the priesthood and does not submit to the rules, but assumes the presidency and priesthood for himself, and others also apostatize with him, leaving the Catholic Church (...). How can one remain in the Church while leaving the Universal Church? It would be an incomprehensible self-contradiction to say that schismatics are still in the Church, and to assert that unauthorized gatherings have apostatized from the Universal Church, have abandoned her."

“So, this is what the first rule of St. Basil the Great teaches us,” continues Archbishop Hilarion: “the Church is one, and it alone has the fullness of the grace-filled gifts of the Holy Spirit.
Anyone who apostatizes from the Church, no matter how—through heresy, schism, or unauthorized assembly—loses the grace of God. Therefore, the Sacraments performed outside the Church have no beneficial effects..Only for the benefit of the Church, for the sake of facilitating joining the Church, one can not "to repeat the rite of baptism over those converting, if it was properly performed outside the Church. Not because this rite was already a grace-filled sacrament, but in the hope that the gift of grace will be received in the very union with the body of the Church." - "If baptism outside the Church is performed incorrectly, even in appearance, as, for example, among the Montanists, then there is no reason, no sense (... according to St. Basil) in making such an indulgence for them <10>. Only because St. Basil did not inextricably link any dogmatic theory about the validity of sacraments outside the Church with Church practice - only for this reason could he fundamentally agree to the permissibility of different practices in different countries, only for this reason is it possible to "follow the custom of each country." "Otherwise, if Church practice were inextricably linked to dogmatic provisions, if the reception of a heretic or schismatic without baptism signified his membership in the Church and the validity of the Sacraments administered outside the Church, if the validity of the Sacraments depended on the faith and dogmatic teaching of the heretic, then the Church would necessarily have to define with absolute precision what error constitutes a heretic, separates one from the Church, and invalidates the Sacraments. Such a definition does not exist, and no general guiding thought can be derived from Church practice."

From all this, Archbishop Hilarion comes to the true conclusion that:
“If in practice some of those outside the Church are not baptized upon being accepted into the Church, this does not at all mean that the Church recognizes them as belonging to it and as having the grace of the Holy Spirit acting in their rite of baptism.”

Archbishop Hilarion draws the same conclusion regarding the sacrament of ordination and, in general, all other sacraments performed outside the Church.

From this precise and clear canonical teaching of the Orthodox Church (confirmed by other canons: Apostolic Canons 46, 47 and 68) it naturally follows that the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, who declared the Sergianist Church to be devoid of grace, did not sin against this teaching at all, but on the contrary, they strictly followed it in everything and therefore rightly considered their position to be the only correct one.

We have arranged all the statements of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors about the lack of grace of the "Moscow Patriarchate" by chapters based on certain canonical, ecclesiological, and dogmatic positions.

The first position is found in the definition of the Moscow Patriarchate as the direct successor of the Renovationist schism, but only in its more subtle and dangerous form, anathematized by His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon. In his Epistle of July 2/15, 1923, Patriarch Tikhon, among other things, defined the Renovationists as follows: "...They separated themselves from the unity of the body of the Universal Church and were deprived of the grace of God, which resides only in the Church of Christ... All actions and sacraments performed by bishops and priests who fell away from the Church are without grace, and the faithful who participate with them in prayer and sacraments not only do not receive sanctification, but are subject to condemnation for participating in their sin." <15> Since the Holy The New Martyrs defined the Moscow false patriarchate as "forming a single indivisible body with the former renovationists" (Catacomb Bishop A.), then it is clear that the above words of the Patriarch must be applied in their entirety to it.

The second position can be seen in the text of the above-mentioned 1st Canon of St. Basil the Great, according to which those who fall into schism are deprived of the succession in the dissemination of grace by virtue of the very separation from the Body of the Church—its only source.

The third provision is defined as falling into heresy, i.e. distortion of one of the dogmas of the Orthodox faith, that, on the basis of the apostolic canons, all sacraments performed by heretics are invalid and without grace: "We command that a bishop or presbyter who has received the baptism or sacrifice of heretics be deposed..." (Canon 4b-e); "A bishop or presbyter... who has not baptized someone defiled by the impious, let him be deposed, as one who mocks the Cross and the death of the Lord, and does not distinguish priests from false priests" (Canon II, 47th): "...It is impossible for those baptized or ordained by heretics to be either faithful or servants of the Church" (Canon 68th).

The fourth position is characterized as a major apostasy or complete renunciation of Christ. This also includes the definition of the Moscow Patriarchate as a "harlot church," depicted in the Book of Revelation as "a woman riding on a scarlet beast," who "held a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (Rev. 17:3-4). This image, of course, testifies to her betrayal of the Bridegroom Christ and union

with the beast-antichrist, after which follows the abandonment of the great harlot by the Grace of Christ and her transformation into “a haven for every unclean spirit” (Rev. 18:2).

In a separate chapter we have placed those statements of the New Martyrs and Confessors, from which it is clear that not only those who perform the Sergianist “sacred rite,” but also everyone “who participates in it is subject to severe condemnation” (New Martyr Vladyka Victor), i.e. not only those directly responsible for the apostasy, but also all who have prayerful and Eucharistic communion with them.

This ecclesiological law follows directly from the Orthodox teaching about the Church as a single Body., “joined and knit together by every joint that supplies it, according to the effective working of every part in its measure” (Eph. 4:6), — where “all the members of one body, though they be many, are one body” (1 Cor. 12:12), and in which “...if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it” (1 Cor. 12:26).
In this regard, St. Theodore of Studium says:
“...Not only unfaithful heretics, not only fornicators and adulterers and others who commit similar indecencies, does the serpent take under his power; but also those who are indifferent to all such and enter into communion with them, since the word is the same: he who touches pitch will be blackened, and he who partakes of the proud will be exacted from him (Sir. 13:1). For this reason, although I am reproached for this, I have forbidden an Orthodox to commemorate at sacred memorials and at the Divine Liturgy someone who pretended to be Orthodox and did not cease to have communion with heretics and heresy. For if he, at the hour of death, had confessed his sin and received the Holy Mysteries, then an Orthodox could have made an offering for him. But since he departed in communion with heresy, how can one admit such a one into Orthodox communion? - The Holy Apostle says: the cup “Are not the blessings which we bless the communion of the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break the communion of the body of Christ? For as one bread is one body, so we, many, are one: for we all partake of that one bread” (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). Apparently, the communion of heretical bread and cup makes the communicant belong to the faction opposed to the Orthodox, and from all such communicants constitutes one body, alien to Christ.” In the same way, St. Basil the Great says: “If anyone claims to confess the completely Orthodox Faith, but is in communion with those who contradict it, unless they break this communion with them upon warning, then they are not even to be considered brothers.” <17> According to canonical rules, all who communicate with the excommunicated must themselves be excommunicated (Apostle, 10; Antioch. 2; Basil the Great, 8X).

In the sectarian view of the structure of the Church of Christ, each member is saved on their own, completely independent of other members; they have the right to interpret Holy Scripture as they see fit and to apply the moral laws of the Gospel to themselves at their own discretion.

It is no coincidence that the Protestant understands the Lord Jesus Christ primarily as his “personal” Savior, and not as the Savior of the entire body of the Church, of which He is the Head (Eph. 5:23). Protestant false-religious individualism and egoism

As a result, it took on such ugly forms as the ecumenical movement, the main doctrine of which was the assertion that no church today has the exclusive right to possess the uncorrupted truth, and therefore salvation is possible in any “Christian” denomination.

Ecumenical notions of some purely mechanical structure of the Church, the formal succession of the hierarchy, and the automatic celebration of the Holy Sacraments have, in many ways, migrated into the consciousness of some Christians who still call themselves Orthodox. According to these false rationales, the most important thing is to stand in the truth, to be "personally saved," and one can receive the Sacraments in any "Orthodox" jurisdiction, under any priest or bishop. According to these Protestant "Orthodox," the most important thing is that their jurisdiction at least generally preserves the external rituals of worship and the formal succession of ordination, for this alone guarantees the receipt of grace and salvation. "We go to church to see God, not to see a priest," they say. "And if this priest deviates from Orthodoxy or church canons, it doesn't concern us in any way." These "Orthodox" in name only are convinced that bishops and priests are on their own, and they are on their own. It's as if they were two different churches. Here, the Orthodox concept of the hierarchical structure of the Church, binding all its members into one body, is completely destroyed. In its place, we see a purely sectarian understanding of this dogma, which, although formally, does not abolish hierarchy itself, but rejects its beneficial significance for the salvation of every member of the Body of Christ, leaving it with only administrative responsibilities. In the Protestant sense, the pastor and bishop are saved on their own, while the ordinary believers are saved each on their own. Such a false teaching clearly contradicts the theology of the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Orthodox Church.

Based on Protestant false doctrine, the sacraments become blessed and saving, primarily by virtue of the faith of those who partake of these sacraments, and regardless of the purity of the confession of those who perform them. Here we are confronted with a purely sectarian heresy, based on a misinterpretation of St. Peter's words about the people of God as a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9).
“The Reformers and Lutherans,” writes the famous Russian dogmatist Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov), “invented the teaching that the reality and effectiveness of the sacraments depends not on the dignity and inner disposition of the performer of the sacraments, but on the disposition and faith of the persons receiving the sacraments, so that a sacrament is a sacrament and has power only during the time of its reception and use with faith, and outside of use, or in the case of reception without faith, it is not a sacrament and remains fruitless.” <18> But in the Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1723 “On the Orthodox Faith” it is said: “...We believe that this sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is performed not by everyone, but only by one pious priest who has received the priesthood from a pious and lawful bishop, as the Eastern Church teaches” (article 17). The Holy Church teaches regarding the episcopal rank that “the Bishop, as the successor of the Apostles, ... is the living image of God on earth and, by the sacred power of the Holy Spirit, is the abundant source of all the Sacraments of the Universal Church, through which salvation is acquired” (ibid., art. 10). Thus, the fullness of the Church is contained in the bishop, “from whom flow

“for us, both teaching, and sacred rites, and governance,” as it is said in the Dogmatic Theology of Metropolitan Macarius. “...The title of Bishop is so necessary in the Church,” it is said in the same Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs, “that without it, neither the Church can be the Church, nor a Christian a Christian, not only cannot be, but can even be called a Christian.” (Article 10) And St. Ignatius the God-Bearer instructs: “Whoever does anything without the knowledge of the bishop serves the devil.”

The priest does not perform a single sacrament personally and is completely dependent on the bishop's rank in all his actions, acting as if in place of the bishop's hands or eyes. Metropolitan Macarius writes:
"A priest also has the authority to perform sacraments and sacred rites in general (except those exclusively belonging to the bishop), but receives this authority from his archpastor at his ordination. Furthermore, in the performance of this duty, he is subject to the constant supervision, authority, and judgment of his archpastor. In particular, the actual performance of certain sacraments is entirely dependent on him: for example, he cannot perform the sacrament of chrismation without holy chrism, which is consecrated only by the bishop; he cannot celebrate the Eucharist without an altar or antimension, which is also consecrated only by the bishop." Archbishop Benjamin's "New Tablet" states regarding the priestly rank: "The priestly rank enlightens those who perform it and guides them to contemplation of the Divine Mysteries only in dependence on the superiors of the clergy and under the guidance of their divine rank. While performing the sacraments in dependence on the bishop, he, although he performs the same sacraments as the superior, does not perform them arbitrarily, but as if by the authority of the rank that imparted to him the sacrament of the priesthood"—or the right to perform the sacrament.

It follows irrefutably that if the higher hierarchy with which a priest is in communion professes heresy or is in schism with the Church, then he cannot in any way receive from his higher hierarchy the gifts of grace bestowed in the sacrament of ordination, nor the right to perform sacred rites. Therefore, neither the faith and disposition of a priest, nor his personal piety, nor his strict adherence to the canons and dogmas, can replace the authority to perform the holy sacraments, which flows only from the episcopal rank. And in connection with this, the holy canons command Orthodox priests that they "in no way be subordinated to bishops who have apostatized or are apostatizing from Orthodoxy" (Canon 3 of the Third Council).

The people of the Church have even less to do with the performance of sacred rites than the lower hierarchy. According to the above teaching, the celebrant, dispenser, and communicant of the Holy Mysteries in the Church is the bishop or the priest who mediates with him; the people are merely communicants. The performance and validity of the Holy Mysteries in no way depend on the people; they only determine whether they approach these Mysteries worthily or unworthily, that is, their efficacy depends on the disposition of those receiving these Mysteries. And this only applies if the sacred rites are performed within the One True Church. But if a heretical celebrant, being outside the Church, has no right to perform the Holy Mysteries,

If he receives the sacraments, the people cannot receive them from him under any law. On the contrary, all who receive anything forbidden in the priesthood "will be excommunicated from the whole Church" (XX Canon of St. Basil the Great).

A special contingent of those "saving themselves" in the Sergianist pseudo-church, according to Protestant theologians, are the so-called "blessedly ignorant" of the truths of Orthodox doctrine and those who do not understand the essence of the heresies of Sergianism and ecumenism—these heresies that have deeply and fatally affected the body of the "Moscow Patriarchate." Such ignorance is supposedly saved by its very ignorance of the most important questions of faith; by this ignorance, it justifies itself before the Lord and therefore bears no responsibility before Him. But the Lord Jesus Christ clearly objects to such a formulation of the question in His Gospel, saying: "The same servant who knew his lord's will, and neither prepared it nor did it according to his will, will receive many stripes: but he who ignorantly did what was worthy of stripes, will receive few stripes" (Luke 12:47-48). “Others ask,” explains Blessed Theophylact of Bulgaria, “even if it is just that he who knew the will of his master and did not act according to it is punished; but why is he punished who did not know? Because he too could have known, but did not want to, and through carelessness he himself became guilty of ignorance. Therefore, he deserves punishment for not knowing voluntarily. Let us fear, brethren! For if he who was completely ignorant deserves punishment, then what excuse will justify those who sin in knowledge, especially if they were teachers?” It was not some purely external circumstances, therefore, that served as the cause of the fall and punishment of those who did not know, but their own carelessness and spiritual weakening, a sinful unwillingness to seek the truth and a complete oblivion of Christ’s promises:

“Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6); or: “Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Luke 11:9), etc.

Therefore, in confirmation of this, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow says: "Rational sheep—unlike dumb ones—can distinguish safe pasture from dangerous thickets; and therefore they themselves will be guilty if they become prey to the wolf." The main difference between sheep and goats is that sheep follow only the true shepherd, "because they know his voice. But they will not follow a stranger, but flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers" (Jn. 10:4-5). Generally, ignorance in matters of faith has never been considered a merit or virtue, but has always been recognized by the Church as the gravest mortal sin. “Ignorance of the Divine laws,” says St. Enifanius of Cyprus, “is a great betrayal of one’s salvation.” And Bishop Ignatius (Brianchaninov) notes that “repentance is possible only with an accurate, even if simple, knowledge of the Orthodox Christian faith, alien to all heresy and evil. “Ignorance of Christianity,” concludes the saint, “is the greatest disaster!” Bishop Theophan the Recluse expresses himself in the same spirit:

"We have a strange prejudice: that as a layman, he has no need to bother with a full knowledge of Christian truth; he is ashamed to declare this knowledge, if he has it, and even more so to defend it. And thus, the realm of lies and the kingdom of its father expands among us... Therefore, anyone who does not know the truth is already a traitor to it, and a traitor to the community of believers or the Holy Church. - Strictly? But that is how it is."

And finally, in his first rule, St. Basil the Great makes no distinction between the leaders of the heresy, or founders of the schism, and all those who followed them out of simple ignorance, calling the latter by the common name -

"an unlearned people," and says that, along with the heresiarchs and schismatics, "some others apostatized, leaving the Catholic Church." Here, Saint Basil makes it clear that not only the heretics themselves and the leaders of schisms or unauthorized gatherings fall away from the Church, but also all the "unlearned people" who associate with them.

In this sense, the Holy New Martyr Archbishop Andrei Ukhtomsky called the church people who followed Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) "a mindless crowd, not even yet catechumenated," that is, completely ignorant of the fundamentals of Orthodox doctrine. Therefore, the Holy New Martyr Bishop Damascene, in a letter to Metropolitan Sergius on March 29, 1929, noted that the masses, "by clinging to their pastors, who do not break communion with you, are unwitting accomplices in your sin."

Another argument that the Sergianists and their sympathizers constantly use in defense of the grace of the "Moscow Patriarchate" is the miracles that occur in one way or another and are somehow connected to it.

Before we begin our discussion, let us say, in the words of St. John Cassian the Roman, that in general, "miracles, while arousing wonder, contribute little to holy living." Therefore, an Orthodox Christian must approach all miracles they encounter and hear about with extreme attention and caution, bearing in mind that in the last times, the number of false miracles performed by the devil and false prophets will increase dramatically.

At present, we can observe miracles in the Moscow Patriarchate in two forms: through icons and relics, as well as dreams and revelations; and through the "elders" revered by the people.

Regarding the latter, one can immediately say with complete certainty that they are all wolves and predators, only destroying the flock of Christ, "for they themselves do not enter, nor suffer those who are entering to enter" into the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 23:13). In the modern Moscow Patriarchate there are not and cannot be true elders and holy men, for all the so-called Sergianist "elders" are themselves heretics, or accomplices of heresy. They, by their position, are all, without exception, forced either to completely justify the Sergianist lie and its modern leaders, or, at the very least, to persuade their spiritual children to communicate with those heretics and apostates with whom they themselves communicate and to whom they themselves submit, and under no circumstances to leave the "church" to which they belong; they are forced, in the words of the holy martyr Bishop. Damaskin, "to babble words of justification with slurred tongues and string with trembling hands ever new links onto the chain of lies and compromises, trampling into the dirt the honor of the snow-white Robe of Christ." Therefore, the miracles performed by these "elders"—

healing of diseases, exorcism of demons, clairvoyance, etc. - cannot but raise doubts about their origin among all honest and conscientious Orthodox Christians.

“The holiness of true holy men is recognized not simply by miracles (for both pagans and heretics can perform miracles with the help of the devil), teaches St. Paisius Velichkovsky, “but by the True Orthodox Faith, by the careful preservation of Divine dogmas and by the observance of all the Apostolic and conciliar rules and traditions of the Orthodox Church, and by a blameless life according to all the Gospel and patristic commandments.” "Study Divine Scripture," says St. Simeon the New Theologian, "and the writings of the Holy Fathers, especially the active ones, so that by comparing their teaching with the teaching and behavior of your teacher and elder, you can see them (these teachings and behavior) as in a mirror and understand: assimilate and keep in mind what is in agreement with Scripture, and recognize and reject what is false and evil, lest you be deceived. Know," warns the venerable father, "that in our days many deceivers and false teachers have appeared." “Therefore,” he says in another place, “we must be careful with all diligence, care and attention, with all vigilance and many prayers, so as not to fall into the hands of any deceiver and deceiver, or false apostle, or false Christ, but to find a true and God-loving guide, who would have Christ within himself and would know exactly the teaching, rules and decrees of the holy Apostles and the dogmas of the holy fathers, or, better to say, who would know the will and secrets of the Lord and Teacher of the Apostles, Christ Himself.”

So, according to the words of Saint Mark of Ephesus, “everyone who speaks against what is commanded, even if he is worthy of faith, even if he fasts, even if he is a virgin, even if he prophesies, let him be to you like a wolf in sheep’s clothing who harms the sheep.”"

Of course, one cannot say that the false Sergianist elders adhere to the true faith and piety in all respects. On the contrary, they are rather active opponents of the faith and, consequently, Satan's favorite tool, who, through supposed miracles, often achieves his main goal—the destruction of the souls of believers. It's frightening to think about, but sometimes in the modern Moscow Patriarchate one encounters such "elders" who perform their signs through sorcery, that is, witchcraft, and sometimes they don't even hide it. Not only do the patriarchal false elders fail to heal spiritual and physical illnesses, not only do they fail to cast out demons from the suffering, but, on the contrary, they cause grave harm to their salvation, infusing their unfortunate souls, who have trusted in the guidance of these spiritual thieves, with "seven other more grievous spirits" (Matthew 12:45), transforming them into devil-possessed God-fighters, incapable of distinguishing truth from falsehood. Those "healed" by the Sergianist false elders will most likely forever be entrenched in the belief in the grace-filled "Moscow Patriarchate," the salvific power of its heretical dogmas, and the sanctity of its heresiarchs and schismatics—which constitutes the primary purpose of the diabolical miracles and signs. From the moment of "healing" from some physical ailment or demonic possession, these unfortunates often begin to suffer from demonic possession—a far more dangerous form of demonic possession, entailing constant fanatical hostility against God, most often expressed in a struggle against the True Church of Christ and its ministers, or in simple stubborn resistance to the Truth. One form of this demonic possession

This is especially evident among Sergian scholars, primarily among the clergy, who, in their blindness and hostility toward the saints, the Church of Christ, and Orthodoxy, compose entire scholarly and theological treatises, dissertations, and apologies in defense of the heresy of Sergianism from historical, dogmatic, canonical, and moral perspectives, in which Sergianism is completely justified, and the holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia are condemned as schismatics and apostates. After reading such pernicious books, the idea is ingrained in people's minds that the Soviet false patriarchate is the true, grace-filled Church of Christ, and that all who reject it as such are enemies of God, who must be combated as sectarians and heretics.

However, Church history knows of cases where, through the special providential action of the Holy Spirit, true miracles were performed even through heretics. Venerable Abba... The Egyptian says on this matter: "...Very often people, corrupt in mind and opponents of the faith, cast out demons and perform great miracles in the name of the Lord. When the apostles, pointing to these people, said: Master, we saw someone in your name casting out demons, and we encouraged him, because this man does not walk with us (Luke 9:49), then although in this case Christ said: do not scold: he that is not with you, neither is he of you (v. 50); however, when these shall say on that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name done many mighty works, then He will give them, as He Himself testifies, this answer: For I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:22-23)". "It is certainly a great thing, and worthy of admiration, to prophesy, cast out demons, and perform great miracles on earth; but he who does all this will not attain the Kingdom of Heaven unless he follows the straight and true path," testifies St. Cyprian of Carthage.

Thus, from all this the conclusion follows that the true miracles and signs performed by heretics and apostates by God's special providence in no way testify that they themselves will be worthy of eternal, incorruptible crowns, and in no way prove the grace and salvation of their heretical community.

Likewise, miracles from venerated holy icons and relics in no way convince us of the grace of the sacraments performed by heretics or schismatics, if these relics are in their possession. Thus, the story of the miracles from the Icon of the Mother of God of Pochayiv relates that around 1721, Pochayiv, along with the icon, was transferred to the Uniates. But the miracles from the icon did not cease, and during the ... years of its presence with the Uniates, 539 miracles were recorded, and this despite the fact that not all of them were included in the chronicle." And in the service for the feast of the transfer of the relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker from Myra in Lycia to the Italian city of Bari, the Holy Church sings: "Shepherd of Christ's flock, Father, you are sent to other sheep in the Latin language, so that you will amaze everyone with your miracles, and lead them to Christ, blessed one, to whom also pray for us unceasingly" (Song 1).
The Holy Church, therefore, believes that miracles from Orthodox relics that fell into the hands of heretics and schismatics have one sole purpose: to bring those who have fallen away to Christ, and not to strengthen them further in their errors. Consequently, all miracles and

Signs that occur in one way or another in the Moscow Patriarchate should be verified only through this criterion, and by this criterion one can judge their origin and purpose.

At the same time, we know from church history that sometimes, by God's permission, false miracles occurred from icons. One of the ancient copies of the life of St. Basil the Blessed, Fool-for-Christ and Moscow miracle worker, recounts how the devil bribed an iconographer to depict Satan's image beneath the surface of an icon of the Mother of God he was painting. The icon was exhibited in the Varvarinsky district of Kitai-gorod, "and from the newly painted icon of the Mother of God, miracles, signs, and healings occurred... however, through the work of Satan, by God's permission, this miraculous image was transformed from the icon." The icon's fame spread throughout Russia. "Basil, by the Holy Spirit, understood the devil's tricks, actions, and deception of the faithful wrought through that miraculous icon... and commanded that... disciple to take a large stone and strike the image hard, so as to shatter it. The saint's disciple doubted this and was afraid to break the icon, but the saint himself took the stone and struck it hard... and split it in two." Beaten by the people and brought to trial, the fool declared that "miracles were performed by the devil's instigation to deceive the faithful." The image of Satan was discovered, after which the artist was executed, and St. Basil was released.

It is also known that in ancient times, the "Rite of Exorcism of Demons from Icons" was used in the liturgical practice of the Russian Church. Whenever an icon began to perform miracles and healings, this rite was recited over it. Only if the miracles from that icon continued was it recognized as miraculous and holy. Therefore, today, when this rite has been completely forgotten, it is impossible to determine with certainty the origin of the various miracles performed by oticons in the Moscow Patriarchate. This is especially true since many newly painted icons, sometimes of less than perfect quality, perform these miracles.

As for the famous ancient icons venerated in the Russian Church, today we rarely hear of these icons performing any miracles. On the contrary, we know of an unmistakably divine sign that recently occurred from the ancient, miraculous Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God, which was far from indicative of the grace of the Moscow Patriarchate. When, in October 1993, during the shelling of the Russian Parliament, "Patriarch" Alexy II, along with a number of bishops and clergy, performed a prayer service before this miraculous icon, which had been specially transferred from the State Tretyakov Gallery by the authorities for this purpose, after the service was over, it was discovered that the icon had cracked. The Moscow Patriarchate leadership attempted to attribute this to the allegedly unfavorable temperature conditions of the Moscow Epiphany Cathedral, where the service was being held.

We know nothing from Church history that false miracles and signs can be performed from the relics of God's holy saints. However, it is well known that such false miracles can appear from false relics belonging to heretics and

apostates.

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov wrote that after their death, “demons often remain present at their graves and appear before them in various forms, either to intimidate or to seduce.”

Currently, the veneration of false saints is growing within the Moscow Patriarchate. For example, just recently the Ukrainian Exarchate (which is in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate) glorified Archbishop Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky), who praised Stalin and communism and, contrary to the canons, simultaneously practiced purulent surgery..

In St. Petersburg, exalted fanatical crowds are actively spreading the cult of veneration as a “holy elder” and “Russian golden-tongued” of the ardent Sergianist Metropolitan John (Snychev), who, during his short time in the St. Petersburg cathedra, managed to republish twice his dissertation on the church schisms of the 1920s and 1930s, directed against the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, with numerous slanders and blasphemies against them, as well as justifications of Sergianism.

Thus, John (Snychev) wrote about the Holy New Martyr Joseph that he "imperceptibly allowed himself to be seduced by sinful delusion" and fell into "the most dangerous state of soul..., which hid his own sins from his sight," in which "the realm of sin, the realm of conceit and arrogance were revealed."

Nevertheless, despite all this blasphemy against the saints, Metropolitan John gained such veneration and popularity from the patriarchal "uneducated people" for his pseudo-patriotic articles (which, moreover, he didn't write) that miracles, signs, and healings have allegedly begun to occur at his grave in great numbers. Some hysterical people spread rumors that Metropolitan John often appears to his admirers in prophetic dreams, and some even claim to have seen him in reality. But even from the works of the late Metropolitan John himself, we know that the Lord Himself strengthened the saints he blasphemed in their struggles. In his dissertation, Metropolitan John, among other things, mentions how one of the fools for Christ in the late 1920s saw the Mother of God in a dream and the holy New Martyr Bishop Demetrius of Gdov standing near her. The Mother of God laid her hand on him and spoke to him to confirm him in his chosen path of confession. "Others," writes Metropolitan John, "saw even more terrifying dreams: they saw the followers of Metropolitan Sergius dwelling in the fires of Gehenna, and the followers of Metropolitan Joseph in great glory."

What conclusion can we draw from all our discussions about miracles and signs?

In any case, it must be acknowledged that a considerable number of miracles performed in various ways by the Moscow false patriarchate are intrinsically Satanic and ultimately pursue one goal: to keep a person in heresy for as long as possible, or permanently, or at least in communion with it. And if a true divine miracle does occur anywhere—a significant dream, a vision of the holy saints of God, the Savior, or the Mother of God, a healing from ancient and venerated Orthodox relics, icons, and relics—their purpose should primarily be edifying, with the goal of bringing erring Sergianists back to Christ, the Truth, and the Church. In all other cases, we have the right to question all miracles' divine origins without fear of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

And, finally, even if we are faced with the fact of a true miracle, manifested in the indicated ways in the heretical Sergianist “church,” we must keep in mind that here only an act of special mercy and condescension of God personally to the lost takes place, as it is said:

"The Lord is good to the ungrateful and evil" (Luke 6:35). And since these miracles and signs were manifested, at least not through the Sergianist "sacraments" and "sacred rites," but directly, or through sacred objects, they in no way prove the grace of the "sacraments" performed by the Sergianist heretics and the entire "Moscow Patriarchate" as a whole, as a saving ecclesiastical organization.

And finally, it should be emphasized once again that any sacraments performed in the “Moscow Patriarchate” can never bear spiritual fruit:

Baptism does not introduce one into the Church, the Eucharist does not unite one with Christ, confession does not forgive sins, ordination does not elevate one to holy orders, chrismation does not impart the gifts of the Spirit, marriage does not make the marriage legal, although during the performance of the aforementioned sacred rites by Sergianist clergy, false miracles that can often stun the consciousness of believers can occur.

And all this is because the “Moscow Patriarchate” has ceased to be the gracious Church of Christ.

It is also necessary to mention the teaching, which is completely absurd from a dogmatic point of view, that the grace of God allegedly did not leave the Old Testament Jerusalem Temple immediately after the crucifixion of the Savior by the Jews, but continued to remain in it for another 37 years, until this Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

From this, they conclude that the withdrawal of grace from an apostate or heretical community is a process immeasurable in time. Various proofs are cited for this assertion, namely, that the Apostles themselves remained in the Temple daily with one accord (Acts 2:46), and continued to participate in the now-abolished Old Testament worship until its destruction.

The Sergian bishop Athanasius (Sakharov) even went so far as to blasphemously assert that the Apostles allegedly bowed their heads in the temple before the murderers of Christ when the high priests or priests bestowed upon them the blessing in the name of God.

From a dogmatic and moral point of view, one cannot agree with this teaching.

Firstly, the process of the retreat of God's grace from a given community, in which signs of apostasy arise and develop, begins long before the official proclamation of a heretical teaching by the highest hierarchy; with this proclamation, the process of the retreat of grace from a given community ends, not begins.

Firstly, the process of the retreat of God's grace from a given community, in which signs of apostasy arise and develop, begins long before the official proclamation of a heretical teaching by the highest hierarchy; with this proclamation, the process of the retreat of grace from a given community ends, not begins.

Secondly, the retreat of the grace of the Holy Spirit should not be understood as a gradual diminution of the power of Divine grace in the Holy Sacraments. According to Church teaching, grace in the Holy Sacraments can only be complete; or it can be absent altogether.
The doctrine of incomplete or partial grace, of the division of grace in the sense of its imperfection—such a doctrine has never been known to the Eastern Orthodox Church—nothing similar was taught by the Holy Fathers or the Ecumenical Councils. Grace can gradually retreat only from unrepentant sinners, until their number increases to such a degree that the entire ecclesiastical body to which they belong is completely deprived of grace.

There is no basis for defending this teaching based on the example of the Jerusalem Temple. When speaking of the withdrawal of the grace of the Holy Spirit from heretics or schismatics, it is always the New Testament grace that is meant, which could not exist in the Old Testament Temple. "For having the law of good things to come as a shadow, and not the very image of things," says the Apostle Paul, "you can never perfect those who draw near with the same sacrifices which they continually offer... For it is impossible with the blood of heifers and sheep to forgive sins" (Hebrews 10:1-4). It is unclear how one can compare things that are completely independent of one another.

In fact, God's grace left the Jerusalem Temple immediately after the Jews committed deicide. The Lord Himself, shortly before His Passion on the Cross, uttered the following prophecy regarding the Jerusalem Temple:
"Behold, your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38), which was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit, immediately after Jesus Christ gave up the ghost, testified to the abandonment of the Temple by His grace by tearing the church curtain in two (Matthew 27:51). "The curtain was torn as a sign," explains Blessed Theophylact, "that the grace of the Spirit had departed from the temple." St. John Chrysostom confirms the same: "The curtain was torn. The Holy of Holies was empty; worship, confined to one place, no longer exists."

As for the Apostles' visit to the Jerusalem Temple, they certainly did not do so because they believed in the salvific power of the now-abolished sacrifices. According to Chrysostom, "The Apostles went as if to pray, but in reality they intended to sow doctrine there." The Apostles never prayed in the Jerusalem Temple, but only pretended to go there to pray, while in reality they had only one intention: to preach Christ to the Jews. It was with precisely the same intention that the holy Apostles went to preach in the Jewish synagogues. This patristic interpretation must be well understood by those who misunderstand the reason for the Temple's existence long after the crucifixion of Christ and the visit of the holy Apostles.

Let us consider a number of other proofs of the lack of grace of the "Moscow Patriarchate".

Having adopted the heresy of Sergianism as an official teaching, the "Moscow Patriarchate" falls under the following anathemas proclaimed by the Russian and Ecumenical Church.

1) The 11th anathema, imposed on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, for sympathy with treason and rebellion against the Tsar's divinely established authority.

"To those who think that Orthodox Sovereigns are elevated to the Throne not by God's special favor towards them, and that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not poured into them at the anointing for the fulfillment of this great calling; and also to those who dare to rebel and commit treason against them —anathema."

2) The oaths of the Great Moscow Church-Zemsky Sobor of 1613, imposed on those who recognize as legitimate in Rus' any authority other than the authority of the Sovereign from the God-chosen royal Dynasty of Romanov.

"It is ordained that God's Chosen One, Tsar Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov, shall be the forefather of rulers in Rus' from generation to generation, responsible for his deeds to the One Heavenly King. And whoever goes against this Council Decree—whether Tsar, Patriarch, or any man—may they be cursed in this age and the next, for they shall be excommunicated from the Holy Trinity..."

Fidelity to this conciliar oath was confirmed at the First All-Diaspora Council in 1921 under the chairmanship of Blessed Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), as well as by the Amur Church and Zemsky Council in Vladivostok in 1922.

3) Anathema of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon of 1918, proclaimed against the Soviet government and all those collaborating with it.

"Come to your senses, you madmen, cease your bloody reprisals. For what you are doing is not only cruel: it is truly the work of Satan; for which you are subject to the fires of Gehenna in the future life—the afterlife—and to the terrible curse of your posterity in this present life—this earthly life. By the authority given to us by God, we forbid you to approach the Mysteries of Christ; we anathematize you, even if you still bear Christian names and even if by birth you belong to the Orthodox Church. We also conjure all of you, faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ, not to enter into any communion with such monsters of the human race: put away the evil from among you (1 Cor. 5:13)."

This anathema was approved by the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church on January 28 (Old Style), 1918, at a closed meeting.

meeting, as well as the Council of the Catacomb Church, which took place in 1937 in Ust-Kut, in the regrouping department

arrest house, with the participation of 2 metropolitans, 4 bishops, 2 priests and 6 laymen, under the chairmanship of the catacomb Metropolitan John.

The Council, in particular, decided that: "...the oath of anathema imposed by His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon is effective and all priests and church servants who dared to consider it an ecclesiastical error and a political means are placed and bound by its force."

4) Anathema of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon in 1922 on the renovationist Supreme Church Administration.

"We forbid recognizing the Supreme Church Administration as an institution of the Antichrist. By the authority given to us by God, we anathematize the Supreme Church Administration and all who have any kind of communion with it."

5) Anathema of the Sixth Ecumenical Council for blasphemy against the holy martyrs (63rd canon).

"We command that the stories of martyrs, falsely composed by the enemies of the truth in order to behead the martyrs of Christ and lead those who hear them to unbelief, not be published in churches, but consigned to the flames. We anathematize those who accept them or heed them as if they were true."

6) Anathema to the Sergians, imposed on the week of the triumph of Orthodoxy, established in the Russian Orthodox Church (catacomb).

"To those who contain the most insane renovationist heresy of Sergianism: who teach that the earthly order of the Church of God is preserved by rejecting the truth of Christ; and to those who assert that the Church of Christ is saved by serving the godless authorities and fulfilling their godless commands, which lead to the trampling of sacred rules, patristic traditions and divine dogmas, and to the destruction of all Christianity; and to those who venerate the Antichrist and his servants, and his forerunners, and all his minions, as a legitimate authority appointed by God; and to all the leaders of this anti-Christian heresy, the confessors and blasphemers of the new martyrs (Sergius of Nizhny Novgorod, Nikolai of Kyiv and Alexei Khutynsky), and their followers, and the renovationists, and other heretics - ANATHEMA."

7) Anathema to ecumenism, proclaimed by the Council of Bishops of the ROCOR in 1983.

"To those who attack the Church of Christ and teach that it is divided into branches that differ in their teaching and life, and who affirm that the Church does not exist visibly, but must unite from branches, schisms, heterodoxy and other beliefs into one

body; and those who do not distinguish between the true priesthood and the Sacraments of the Church and the heretical ones, but teach that the baptism and Eucharist of heretics are sufficient for salvation; and those who have communion with these heretics, or assist them, or defend their new heresy of ecumenism, imagining that there is brotherly love and unity among disunited Christians—anathema."

We place this anathema here because the ecumenism of the Moscow Patriarchate was only an integral part of Sergianism, since the Moscow Patriarchate was forced to join the World Council of Churches in 1961 by the same Soviet power, to all of whose orders the Sergianist hierarchs had pledged to unquestioningly obey since 1927.

Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) wrote about the "Moscow Patriarchate":

"This false church has been twice anathematized. His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon and the All-Russian Church Council anathematized the communists and all their collaborators. This terrible anathema has not yet been lifted and remains in force... And a terrible thing happened in 1927, when Metropolitan Sergius, who headed the church, with his shameful, apostate declaration subjugated the Russian Church to the Bolsheviks and declared his collaboration with them. And the expression of the pre-confession prayer came true in the most precise sense: 'they fell under their own anathema'... For in 1918 the Church anathematized all collaborators of communism, and in 1927 it itself joined the company of these collaborators and began to praise the red, godless government—to praise the red beast of which the Apocalypse speaks. This is not enough. When Metropolitan Sergius published his criminal declaration—from "The faithful immediately separated from the Soviet Church, and the Catacomb Church was created. It, in turn, anathematized the official Church for its betrayal of Christ."

Based on all this, the Metropolitan concludes:

"Will anyone dare to claim that the Lord and His grace abide in a church of evildoers, which praises His satanic enemies and collaborates with them, which for this is under a double anathema, as stated above? Can a church that has united with the God-fighters be blessed with grace?! The answer is clear!... We, of course, cannot recognize the church of evildoers as the bearer and keeper of grace. For outside of Orthodoxy there is NO grace, and the Soviet church has deprived itself of grace."

The same question was asked by Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles, who in his article "Why is the Moscow Patriarchate without grace?" also gives a negative answer:

“The Moscow Patriarchate has accepted and firmly adheres to the heresy of ecumenism – by decision of the Church AbroadTHOSE WHO ACCEPTED THE HERESY OF ECUMENISM ARE ANATHEMATED ...

"Further confirmation of the lack of grace of the God-fighting government and, along with it, its branch, the Moscow Patriarchate, is found in the letter of St. Patriarch Tikhon of January 19, 1918, which anathematized the Soviet government. In this letter, describing the bloody persecution of the Church, the Patriarch says: "THIS IS A TRULY SATANIC WORK." Archbishop Anthony concludes: "We must ask ourselves whether those who have committed the deeds of the Antichrist—lawlessness, deception of believers—have fallen into condemned heresy, apostatized from God and excommunicated from Him, KGB agents, i.e., those who have joined the ranks of God's enemies, who call themselves "militant atheists" and thereby demonstrate their hatred of God, who have been anathematized and yet have taken up residence in churches, i.e., in temples, can have grace?"

Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky) of Washington and Florida, in his famous speech about Patriarch Tikhon, read in the Synodal Hall in New York on March 24/April 6, 1975, citing the text of Patriarch Tikhon’s Message on the anathematization of the Renovationist Supreme Church Administration, said:

“We present this message because the modern Moscow Patriarchate, in its relations with the Soviet regime, in its international relations with the communist movement, in its management of its representative, the godless regime, and perhaps in some other respects, is following the path of the ‘Living Church.’” Regarding the reason why grace left Metropolitan Sergius and his followers, Vladyka Nikon said: “Obviously, Metropolitan Sergius assumed that the grace of God, which he hoped to preach under the protection of the godless regime, would conquer communism and that an Orthodox way of life would be established in Russia. However, it turned out that the grace of God requires truth and is incompatible with lies and deception, which is inevitable when collaborating with the communist government, and that it is impossible to simultaneously serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).” <56>

In all of this, it is necessary to pay special attention to the fact that not only the renovationist leaders are subject to anathema, i.e. excommunication from the Church, but also “all who have any kind of communion with them,” not only the ideologists of Sergianism and its leaders, but also “those with them,” not only those who preach the ecumenical heresy, but also “those who have communion with these heretics,” as is evident from the texts of the above anathemas.

But what is anathema in the exact sense, according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church?

Bishop Theophan the Recluse answers this question: "The meaning of anathema is that the one subjected to it is cast out of the Church, and by becoming outside of it, not only is he deprived of its grace, but also subject to all the gracelessness that exists outside of it." And the Serbian canonist Bishop Nikodim, based on patristic teaching, says that the word anathema must always be understood as "final excommunication from the Church, the consequence of which is eternal destruction."

The following circumstance may further serve as proof of the lack of grace of the Sergianist pseudo-church. This is the condemnation of lack of grace that Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) brought upon himself through his blasphemy against the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, against the Church of Christ, whose faithful children they remained to the end, and against the holy sacraments they celebrated—his blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Thus, in his and the Provisional Patriarchal Holy Synod's Resolution of August 6, 1929, No. 1864, Metropolitan Sergius determined that all "sacraments performed in separation from the unity of the Church by followers who have apostatized from the Patriarchal Church... of the former Leningrad Metropolitan Joseph, the former Gdov Bishop Dimitry, and the former Urazov Bishop Alexy, as being in a state of suspension, are also invalid...".

And in a letter to the Holy New Martyr Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan dated September 18, 1929, the same Metropolitan Sergius wrote about the Holy New Martyrs:

"These are not simply people complaining about church order; they are a special society, already organized in their separation from the Church, a 'church of the evil ones' in the full sense of the word. It is therefore just that the leaders of this society have been brought to trial and subjected to prohibition, and all who pray with them and follow them are subject to excommunication."

“Of all the ecclesiastical crimes of Metropolitan Sergius,” the church historian comments on these acts, “this blasphemy against grace - undoubtedly, the most serious crime.For ecclesiastical dissent (and not in matters of faith, but in matters of church policy!), Metropolitan Sergius deprived a person not of life and freedom, but of much more—he excommunicated him from the very Source of Eternal Life. And although this "excommunication" undoubtedly remained only on paper, this does not diminish the grave sin of Metropolitan Sergius, who imagined that Divine Grace was subject to his clerical decrees, adopted in fulfillment of the orders of the NKVD! "By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned," the Lord warns all unjust judges (Matt. 12:37). And church canons command that false accusers be subjected to the same punishment to which they unjustly sought to inflict the innocent (Canon 6, Vol. 1, Ecumenical Council).

Metropolitan Sergius committed unforgivable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit with his next act. Almost immediately after the proclamation of the Declaration, by the decision of the Sergianist Synod on October 8/21, 1927,**the special petition was cancelled divine service “for those persecuted today for the Orthodox faith and the Church, and for confessors and martyrs who have ended their lives” and a special day on January 25 – “commemoration of all confessors and martyrs who have died in the current cruel time of persecution” (Resolution of the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of June 14, 1918).**

But instead, the aforementioned decree of the Synod implied the petition: “For our God-protected country, its authorities and army.”

The text of this Decree itself cannot be found in any of the known sources on the church history of our century, but judging by some indirect evidence from the letters of the New Martyrs of Russia, it is obvious that the commemoration of the atheists and God-fighters should have taken place not only at the litanies, but also at the Proskomedia during the celebration of the most holy

The Sacrament of the Eucharist, as well as at the "Great Entrance." This is proven by the practice established in the Moscow Patriarchate itself.

The fanatical Sergianist Metropolitan Benjamin (Fedchenkov) recounted in his memoirs how he commemorated the names of the God-fighters at the proskomedia, taking particles from the prosphora for them and mixing them with the particles taken for the Orthodox, in one cup together with the supposed Body and Blood of Christ:

“I commemorate (both at the proskomedia) both Joseph Stalin and Georgy Katkov, and our authorized representative Nikita Smirnov,How the apostle commanded (???!) and as my heart demands it.”

Soviet hierarchs performed prayers and magpies not only for the health but also for the "repose" of the godless leaders of communism: Lenin, Stalin, Brezhnev, Andropov, and other red leaders, thereby completely abolishing the Church's teaching on the possibility of salvation through faith in God.

Thus, in his speech before the memorial service for I.V. Stalin, “Patriarch” Alexy Simansky said:

"We prayed for him when news arrived of his grave illness. And now that he is gone, we pray for the peace of his immortal soul... Prayer, filled with Christian love, reaches God. We believe that our prayer for the departed will be heard by the Lord. And to our beloved and unforgettable Joseph Vissarionovich, we prayerfully, with deep, fervent love, proclaim eternal memory."

“Patriarch” Pimen expressed himself in the same spirit before the memorial service for L.I. Brezhnev:

"As we bid farewell to the deceased on his final journey, we pray fervently for him and believe in the power of our prayers. Let us, my dears, offer up our fervent prayers for the newly departed Leonid and proclaim to him 'Eternal Memory.'"

In justification of such blasphemy against the Christian faith and its sacraments, the Sergians usually point out that in the Ancient Church, prayers were always offered for pagan emperors who persecuted Christians.

But how do we know that ancient Christians prayed for the repose (!) of these pagan emperors, served magpies for them, as was done in the "Soviet Church," performed funeral services for them, and even believed in the power of such prayers? Can the Sergianist theologians point to when and where ancient Christians prayed for the health of pagan emperors, specifically at the Liturgy of the Faithful during the Proskomedia and the "Great Entrance"?

If prayers for Roman authority were offered at the services of the early Christians, it was only at the Liturgy of Catechumens or at other services, but at the Liturgy of the Faithful, only the faithful were commemorated. Furthermore, is it possible that the Orthodox

Did Christians pray for the well-being of the pagan authorities? They prayed for their enlightenment, for their enlightenment with the light of Christ's Truth.

This is the reason why Metropolitan Sergius, with his Decree—"with this blasphemy of his," as the holy martyr Bishop Victor testified—"violates the prayerful meaning of the great sacrament and destroys its gracious significance for the eternal salvation of the souls of Orthodox believers."

This blasphemous, sacrament-desecrating decree of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) regarding the commemoration of the faithful of the godless regime at the liturgy has not yet been repealed in the "Soviet Church" and continues to serve as clear evidence of its lack of grace...